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Hard Luck Stories

Police Unit Bemoans News of Informers

The DC Police Department thinks *The Daily Rag* is "definitely a threat to our operations."

Captain George Sutter, detailed to the Organized Crime Division and Director of the DC police intelligence division, told the *Washington Post* on Sunday, Oct. 7 that *The Daily Rag's* publication of two stories on local police informers and illegal police activity imperiled the police department's intelligence work.

When the *Rag* called Sutter the following Monday, however, he said "I didn't say that. I don't know who said that." He refused to comment on the stories published in the *Rag* on underground police agents.

The police department is obviously uptight and they should be. The information printed indicates that the Intelligence Division of the MPD regularly engages in burglary, sabotage of legal events, invasion of privacy, interference with the U. S. mail, and indiscriminate surveillance.

Sgt. Schoffler reads The Rag.

Robert Merritt, former MPDC and FBI informer whose confession was run in the last issue, for instance, used to regularly hand over copies of *The Daily Rag* to Carl Schoffler of the DC Intelligence Division. In early December, Merritt gave Schoffler a copy of issue no. 10 which featured a cover cartoon of a buxom woman wearing a button reading "Fuck the Food Tax." Schoffler, according to Merritt, laughed and said, "That's good. Now we can get those radical bastards the same way C & P telephone got *Quicksilver Times.*" (When *Quicksilver*, then DC's underground paper, published information on how to use credit cards illegally, C & P approached all of *Quicksilver's* distributors in Maryland and Virginia and threatened them with prosecution if they sold the paper. They also took *Quicksilver* to court.)

Post Office threatens subscribers.

A few days after the *Rag* printed the "Fuck the Food Tax" cartoon, it was discovered that the Post Office planned to take the paper to court for obscenity. The Post Office also had approached *Rag* subscribers asking them to refuse delivery of the paper or face possible prosecution for soliciting illicit materials in the mail. Luckily, the Attorney General's office decided not to prosecute; *The Rag* has filed a class action suit against the Post Office, under the auspices of the American Civil Liberties Union, for interference with First Amendment rights (see *Rag*, issue no. 21).

At the present it is entirely unclear who is responsible for governing the behavior of the DC police. If you ask the City Council, they say they are; if you ask the Mayor's office, they say they are; if you ask the Congress, they say they are; if you ask the Justice Department, they say they are. As a result of the jurisdictional chaos that exists in this city, the police are free to do as they please, particularly the Intelligence Division.

Polling the Powers.

The same problem that Watergate exposed nationally — illegal activities carried out by government agencies — exists locally. Last week the *Rag* called on Mayor Washington, the DC City Council, Senators Eagleton and Bayh, Delegate Fauntroy and Rep. Natcher and Diggs seeking information on what groups have been infiltrated, who authorizes such surveillance, how the surveillance system works, and what information is being sought. No answers have been received. It seems apparent that none of these people or institutions really know what is going on, although they bear constitutional /legal responsibility for these events.

Congress must put a stop to illegal police activities in the city. Legislation must be passed immediately to protect the public from indiscriminate activities of police agencies, the IRS and the Civil Service Commission.

Mayor Washington and the City Council should issue strict guidelines to the police. Representatives on the Hill with responsibility for District affairs — Bayh, Eagleton, Diggs, or Fauntroy — should hold public hearings and raise enough stink to get the police off the back of the DC activist community.

Role of the Press.

And the commercial press — the *Post* and the *Star-News* — must devote their massive resources to get to the bottom of the police agencies' surveillance, which, according to informant Merritt, has been aimed at organizations such as Common Cause, American Civil Liberties Union, as well as the city's radical activists.

The disclosure of the obvious gap in who has control for these illegal police activities indicates that immediate steps should be taken. The *Rag* suggests the following guidelines be considered for City Council and Congressional hearings.

—Carefully drawn criteria for collection of information: what type of individuals and groups should the police be authorized to collect data on, how long may the surveillance continue, and what methods can be used? Indiscriminate collection of slanderous material must cease.

—Standards for the dissemination of information: various police agencies and even private organizations regularly exchange with each other the contents of supposedly confidential dossiers. This must cease!

—External Audit: Individuals and organizations surveilled and their attorneys should have the right to examine their own files.

—Purging of files: Individuals or groups should have the right to eliminate false or malicious information from their own file.

—Notification of Surveillance: Each individual or group must be notified that they are the target of surveillance, and the individual, group or their attorney should have access to any files, evidence, dossiers or reports prepared on them.

—Illegal methods: Dirty tricks such as breaking and entering, interference with mail., provocations, sabotage and wiretaps on individuals or groups engaged in legal constitutional activities must be strictly prohibited.